

*Statement of Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez
Natural Resources Committee Markup
“HR 4299 Data Preservation Act of 2019”
July 29, 2020*

Mr. Chairman, I speak in support of *HR 4299, the Data Preservation Act of 2019*. This bipartisan legislation would reauthorize the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program (NGGDPP) through 2024, a program that expired in 2016. This important science program contributes to the preservation of data necessary for renewable resource development, public safety and environmental protection. Unquestionably, this NGGDPP yields significant economic and scientific value. I want to commend the gentleman from Colorado, Mr. Lamborn for their co-leadership on this long overdue measure.

The NGGDPP was established in 2005 as a part of the Energy Policy Act. This program supports and fosters the archival of geological, geophysical, and engineering data, maps, photographs, samples, and other physical specimens by providing technical and financial assistance to state geological surveys and U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus. The preservation of this data provides information crucial to the future of scientific research, decision-making on energy and mineral resources, management of natural resources, improving our understanding of natural hazards, and pollution clean-up.

My home state of New York applied NGGDPP resources to support the scanning of over 1,700 maps, therefore preserving the documents and making them more accessible. State agencies, such as the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection, have used the scans of the New York bedrock maps for projects such as landslide mitigation, resource planning, and habitat protection. These maps have also been used by the engineering community in planning and construction of a new water supply tunnel for New York City. Engineers on the project stated that the existence of archival bedrock data in the New York Geological Survey open file saved the City “millions of dollars...”.

Through this program, New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware used geologic and geophysical logs from their respective collections to cooperate on a transboundary study to understand the Potomac Aquifer, which is a principal supplier of drinking water in each state. The project was supported by the USGS National Cooperative Geological Mapping Program (STATEMAP). The geologic information, made available in part from the NGGDPP, assisted the team with identifying the dimensions of the aquifer, and for locating optimal drilling locations for additional test wells. The use of existing geologic and geophysical information allowed the team of researchers to make optimal use of their research funds. In Florida, funding from this program allowed the state to exam core samples which led to discovery of natural sources of arsenic, which fostered development of techniques that mitigate the release of this element underground sources of drinking water.

I would like to conclude my remarks by reiterating my support for HR 4299 because this bill is about good geological and geophysical data, upon which intelligent policy debates can take place and informed decisions can be made. The NGGDPP science is used by all levels of government to help conserve species, lands, resources, and priority ecosystems and helps communities understand the implications of change, anticipate the effects of change, and reduce the risks associated with a changing environment. For this reason, I strongly support it. Thank you.